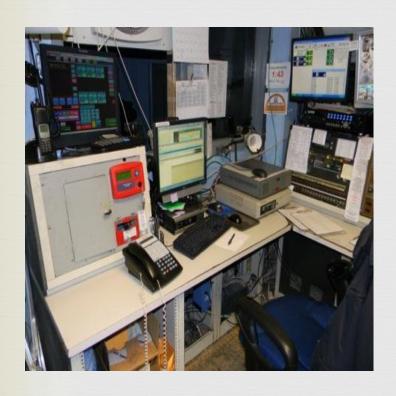


Previous research focusing on stress in dispatchers





- Three populations: law enforcement, railroad, and ATC
- Stress from lack of hands-on involvement, poor training, lack of respect from coworkers, work pressures, low pay, burnout.
- "Their experiences have been virtually ignored." (Gurevich et al, 2012)

Study Details

- Research funded by Forest Service and MTDC
- Qualitative design: qualitative research is about exploring issues, understanding phenomena, and answering questions by analyzing and making sense of unstructured data (qsrinternational.com)

Subjects

- 11 total: 6 females, 5 males
- Average of 14.2 years of dispatch experience
- 3 from local dispatch, 4 from GACC, 4 from NICC



Method

CS

- "I am interested in learning more about what you find stressful as a wildland fire dispatcher, and how you cope with these stressors."

Results: Stressors

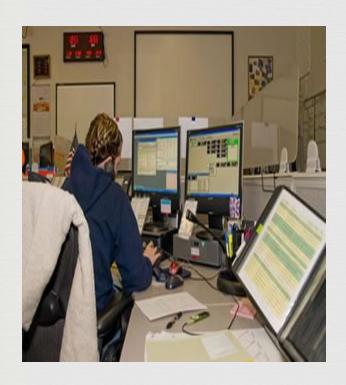
- Contending with job-related issues: supervisor turnover and conflicts, understaffing, physical work environment (phone, radio, computers and software, training)
- *© Dealing with control issues:* "In dispatch you are bound by... things you have no control over." Tyler

Results: Coping

- Taking time off: I've figured out in the last few years that there is more to life than work." Cathy
- *Exercising:* "If I have a bad day sitting in front of the computer because we're sitting all day, going for a nice hike or hitting the gym helps my mental state and to come back fresh the next day." Rebecca
- Providing a service: "I fight the battle for the people on the ground. My golden rule is 'don't forget where you come from.'" Tyler
- Receiving support from others: "I have good support at home. I think finding someone...that understands the complexity of what job you chose is also helpful." Tom

Key Finding

03



A complex and at times even a paradoxical relationship between the dispatchers interviewed and stress was noted. In other words, while subjects felt that the stressors experienced as a dispatcher had the ability to negatively effect their performance, they also believed that stress was beneficial at times.

Key finding: cont'd

- "Stress is kind of an interesting thing in the fire world because I think there is a 'like' for stress otherwise we'd probably go find a simpler job somewhere. It's kind of a mixed bag whether the stress is a positive or a negative, I think." Tom
- "You never really know what is going to be thrown at you day to day. I do like that...honestly, the busier we are the better, for me. It's just that adrenaline high. That's the thing I keep coming back to." Diane
- "I'm just kind of stimulated...when it's really busy...it's exciting for me. It doesn't stress me out, I get into it. Where for a lot of other people, it overwhelms them and they just shut down." Tyler

Next steps

CB

Rese findings will hopefully help to set the foundation for future research projects that focus upon stress and coping within a much larger and representative sample of wildland fire dispatchers.



